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RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/54/605/Add.2)*]

54/159. Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance

The General Assembly,

Recalling that all States have pledged themselves, under the Charter of the United Nations, to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

Reaffirming that discrimination against human beings on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter,

Recalling article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[1] and article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[2]

Reaffirming its resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981, by which it proclaimed the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,

Emphasizing that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is far-reaching and profound and that it encompasses freedom of thought on all matters, personal conviction and the commitment to religion or belief, whether manifested individually or in community with others,

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[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

[2] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

Reaffirming the call of the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993, for all Governments to take all appropriate measures in compliance with their international obligations and with due regard to their respective legal systems to counter intolerance and related violence based on religion or belief, including practices of discrimination against women and the desecration of religious sites, recognizing that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion,[3]

Calling upon all Governments to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief to enable him to carry out his mandate fully,

Alarmed that serious instances of intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, including acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by religious intolerance, occur in many parts of the world and threaten the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Deeply concerned that, as reported by the Special Rapporteur, the rights violated on religious grounds include the right to life, the right to physical integrity and to liberty and security of person, the right to freedom of expression, the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the right not to be arbitrarily arrested or detained,[4]

Believing that further efforts are therefore required to promote and protect the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief and to eliminate all forms of hatred, intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief,

1. *Reaffirms* that freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is a human right derived from the inherent dignity of the human person and guaranteed to all without discrimination;

2. *Urges* States to ensure that their constitutional and legal systems provide effective guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, including the provision of effective remedies in cases where the right to freedom of religion or belief is violated;

3. *Also urges* States to ensure, in particular, that no one within their jurisdiction is, because of his or her religion or belief, deprived of the right to life or the right to liberty and security of person or subjected to torture or arbitrary arrest or detention;

4. *Further urges* States, in conformity with international standards of human rights, to take all necessary action to prevent such instances, to take all appropriate measures to combat hatred, intolerance and acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by religious intolerance and to encourage, through the educational system and by other means, understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief;

5. *Recognizes* that legislation alone is not enough to prevent violations of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief;

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[3] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III, sect. II, para. 22.

[4] E/CN.4/1994/79, para. 103.

6. *Emphasizes* that, as underlined by the Human Rights Committee, restrictions on the freedom to manifest religion or belief are permitted only if limitations are prescribed by law, are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, and are applied in a manner that does not vitiate the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

7. *Urges* States to ensure that, in the course of their official duties, members of law enforcement bodies, civil servants, educators and other public officials respect different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate against persons professing other religions or beliefs;

8. *Calls upon* all States to recognize, as provided for in the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, the right of all persons to worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief and to establish and maintain places for those purposes;

9. *Expresses its grave concern* at any attack upon religious places, sites and shrines, and calls upon all States, in accordance with their national legislation and in conformity with international human rights standards, to exert the utmost efforts to ensure that such places, sites and shrines are fully respected and protected;

10. *Recognizes* that the exercise of tolerance and non-discrimination by persons and groups is necessary for the full realization of the aims of the Declaration;

11. *Takes note with appreciation* of the interim report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief,[5] who was appointed to examine incidents and governmental actions in all parts of the world that are incompatible with the provisions of the Declaration and to recommend remedial measures as appropriate, and encourages the continued efforts on the part of the Special Rapporteur;

12. *Notes* the request by the Special Rapporteur that his title be changed from Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance to Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, which will be considered further by the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-sixth session;

13. *Encourages* the Special Rapporteur to contribute effectively to the preparatory process for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in 2001 by transmitting to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights his recommendations on religious intolerance which have a bearing on the Conference;

14. *Encourages* Governments to give serious consideration to inviting the Special Rapporteur to visit their countries so as to enable him to fulfil his mandate even more effectively;

15. *Also encourages* Governments, when seeking the assistance of the United Nations Programme of Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights, to consider, where appropriate, including requests for assistance in the field of the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

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[5] See A/54/386.

16. *Welcomes and encourages* the continuing efforts of non-governmental organizations and religious bodies and groups to promote the implementation and dissemination of the Declaration;

17. *Requests* the Commission on Human Rights to continue its consideration of measures to implement the Declaration;

18. *Requests* the Special Rapporteur to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the Special Rapporteur receives the necessary resources to enable him fully to discharge his mandate;

20. *Decides* to consider the question of the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance at its fifty-fifth session, under the item entitled "Human rights questions".

83rd plenary meeting
17 December 1999